

# PEOPLE & THINGS

**F**AMILIARITY with irreplaceable persons—that is one of the great rewards of going to the cinema. There, and nowhere else, can we watch Clémenceau going up to the forward area in the Somme, Renoir painting with the brushes strapped to his fingers, and the aged Tolstoy stumping along a wayside platform.

Those who have seen these things will never forget them. But they are, at most, mere glimpses. We have to buy our ten seconds of Tolstoy at a high price in ephemeral drivel. I was particularly delighted, therefore, to learn that in the case of Dr. Albert Schweitzer there is to be no such summary execution. His life is to be covered at feature-length in the film now being completed by Mr. Jerome Hill and Miss Erica Anderson. He himself will appear in the many scenes which have been taken in and around his hospital at Lambaréné; the sound-track will include some of the recordings which he recently made in the little Alsatian township of Günsbach; and, as a final mark of authenticity, Dr. Schweitzer will himself write, and speak, a large part of the commentary.

Hitherto Dr. Schweitzer has always insisted that it should not be shown during his lifetime. I now hear, however, that he has withdrawn this veto; and I hope that before many months we shall be able to see what is, by all accounts, one of the cinema's greatest contributions to history.

## Tennis Courts

**T**HE retirement of Mr. Etchebaster, at the age of sixty, after twenty-five years as the world's champion real-tennis player, has led me to reflect on the dwindling opportunities now open to those who may wish to take up this ancient and aristocratic pastime.

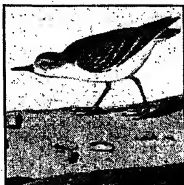
Of the forty-two courts listed in the British Isles, only thirteen are now officially declared to be in use. They range from the Royal Tennis Court at Hampton Court, which was built by Henry VIII in 1530 and later rebuilt by Charles II, to the humbler but very serviceable specimens now at the disposal of Canford School, Queen's Club, the M.C.C., Newcastle Corporation, and the Eire Office of Public Works. But real tennis is, above all, a country-house game, and the courts at Hatfield, Petworth, Woburn, Goodwood and Stratfield Saye would seem to have fallen into disuse.

Does the dialect of Canasta now rule, where once the talk was all of the dedans and the *petit trou*? One house at least—Heythrop, which has a court built in 1872, and now belongs to the Society of Jesus—may be assumed to escape such a charge.

## A Rare Visitor

**T**HE semi-palmated sandpiper, or calidris pusilla, is one of the hardest of birds. Content to make its home, so the dictionaries tell me, in a mere depression in the ground, it thrives, as few of us can claim to do, on a 99.16 per cent animal diet. From Alaska to the Hudson Bay it is known for its loud whinny, its monosyllabic "chrruk," and for a high-pitched quavering trill which would appear to derive from the silver age of bel canto. It is given to aggressive posturing; with its throat inflated and every feather of its body nearly reversed, it presents a quote from the lexicon, and should

## By ATTICUS



The semi-palmated Sandpiper, as Audubon sees it in his "American Birds"

be the last to dispute it) "a strange sight."

This idiosyncratic bird is one of the rarest of transatlantic visitors, and I was interested to hear from Mr. H. K. Bagnall-Oakley, a master at Gresham's School, Holt, that during last season he identified a calidris pusilla on National Trust property at Arnold's Marsh in Norfolk and was confirmed in this by two American ornithologists who happened to be with him at the time. Alarmed by its sepia rump, and not the man to miss its scutellated tarsus, Mr. Bagnall-Oakley was able to pin down the bird as the first of its kind to visit England since 1907.

## Profession of Poetry

**I** DO not envy the Professor of Poetry in the University of Oxford. His duties, it is true, are light. One lecture a term would break nobody's back. But as I settled into my collapsible chair in the Examination Schools last Wednesday afternoon, and Professor Cecil Day Lewis launched into the subject of Emily Brontë, I felt that his task was not easy. It was cold and damp. Gothic shadows lay thick on the coconut matting. The audience, though well-disposed, betrayed only the benign passivity of the mescaline addict.

An hour later, when the Professor, punctual as a Swiss express, pulled up at the buffers on the stroke of six, something remarkable had occurred. It was a pleased, assuaged and excited audience that put up its pencils and streamed out into the High. At twenty-five to six the poet had taken over from the Professor; and Mr. Day Lewis's reading of Emily Brontë's marmoreal lines, combined with his lucid and challenging analysis of the sources of her work, had given his hearers as insight, at first hand, into the mysteries of poetic imagination.

## Artists in Academia

**I**T is nearly ten years since Mr. E. C. Gregory approached Leeds University with the suggestion that he should provide the money for a certain number of practising artists to live in the University and mix with its members.

Mr. Gregory's scheme has now been in operation for nearly four years, and among those who have benefited by it are Mr. James Kirkup, whose poems are familiar to readers of THE SUNDAY TIMES, Mr. Martin Froy, whose first show at the Hanover Gallery put him in the front rank of the English painters of his generation, and Mr. Reg Butler, whose successes at the Venice Biennale and in the "Unknown Political Prisoner"

competition have given him an international reputation as a sculptor.

The experiment has worked well, and the University (so I hear from Professor Bonamy Dobree) has "become familiar with the idea of art as a normal part of life."

Mr. Gregory himself is a man of inviolable modesty. Not for nothing, however, has he a strong facial resemblance to William Blake's "Man Who Built the Pyramids"; and the Leeds venture, so discreet in its revolutionary implications, is but one of the many services which he has rendered to contemporary art—as a printer, a publisher, and the most generous of patrons.

## The Conspirator

**O**NE of the few survivors of the July conspiracy against Hitler was Baron von Gersdorff, who is now President of the Racing Association of Western Germany. I hear that during his recent visit to this country he went to Newbury races, walked round the course, and took measurements for the water jump and open ditch.

He also went out with the Crawley and Horsnam, and was lucky enough to take part in one of the best days of the season. He did not quite equal the accomplishment of Brigadier Gerard, who overlooked and despatched the fox himself, but he was right up with hounds when they killed, and was presented with the brush by the Master, Mrs. H. G. Gregson.

## Leadership

**T**HERE will be a rare gathering of famous oarsmen, I hear, at the dinner which is to be held on Saturday, April 3, in commemoration of the 100th annual boat race between Oxford and Cambridge.

The anniversary may be said to have been largely annexed by that great rowing family, the Burnells—in that the chairman, on April 3, will be Colonel C. D. Burnell, who rowed for Oxford during the four years 1895-98, while the definitive history of the race has just been written by his son, Mr. R. D. Burnell, and will be published this spring.

Not every great oarsman has children who follow in his footsteps. R. C. Lehmann, for instance. Neither Mr. John, nor Miss Rosamond, nor Miss Beatrix Lehmann, is a familiar figure on the tow-path. In the case of the Burnells, there is no such incongruity. Giant has followed strong-thighed giant; and in 1948 Colonel Burnell had the pleasure of seeing his son with an Olympic Gold Medal at Henley, where he had himself rowed against Belgium, in the victorious Leander Eight, during the Olympic Regatta of 1908.

## Art Not for Art's Sake

**T**HE phrase "I may not know much about art, but I know what I like" is one which has suggested itself to all of us in moments of exasperation. I heard the other day of a variant which may become equally popular, if ever the National Gallery decides to follow the example of the American museum which now issues postage-stamp reproductions of its best pictures. To seal one's envelopes with these is a mark of practical concern for the fine arts; and, like all such gestures, it is often copied for reasons of social prestige.

"Why d'you bother with those?" an acquaintance of mine was asked. "You know you can't tell Rembrandt from Rubens." The incipient patron flushed. "I may not know much about art," he said, "but I know what I like."